

ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS ADDITIONS AND WILD PRATT RIVER ACT

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Additions and Wild Pratt River Act. This legislation builds upon a proud Washington tradition of protecting our public lands and improves the quality of life for many of my constituents and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts from across the state of Washington.

One of the popular glories of my district in Washington State is the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, a 362,000 acre wilderness that straddles the crest of the Cascade Mountains just west of the Seattle/Tacoma metropolitan area. My legislation will expand the boundary of the existing wilderness area to embrace important lower-elevation lands and complete watersheds. In doing this, we are—with a single exception—addressing only federal lands already under the administration of the U.S. Forest Service.

FITTING THIS ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS EXPANSION INTO A LARGER FRAMEWORK

Preserving our natural heritage of the wildest, most natural Federal lands as wilderness is an ongoing effort by Congress. Set in motion 43 years ago with enactment of the historic Wilderness Act on September 3, 1964, Congress, to this day, has consistently pursued this work in a bipartisan, or perhaps I should say, nonpartisan way.

The people of the State of Washington understand how this bipartisanship works for their lasting benefit. We live today with the benefits of three great national parks. In many ways, Mt. Rainier, Olympic, and the North Cascades National Parks are the anchors of the popular outdoor recreational resources that are treasured by our residents and visitors alike. To these treasures add a wide spectrum of other recreational areas on our public lands, including wilderness areas that have received this highest form of federal protection from Congress. It is fair to say that every one of these conservation achievements—as proud a record as any State can boast of—has been the product of bipartisan work by generations of our State's elected leaders.

The honor roll for this proud tradition of bipartisan conservation leadership is too long to recount here. However, two names would be found at the top of anyone's listing—former Senator Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, a Democrat, and former Governor and Senator Daniel J. Evans, a Republican. It is noteworthy that each was a key architect in the protection of the original Alpine Lakes Wilderness through legislation Congress enacted in 1976. I am proud to follow their significant accomplishment with my own legislation.

THE ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS ADDITIONS AND WILD PRATT RIVER ACT EXPLAINED

Madam Speaker, my new legislation could not be more straight-forward. It does not propose to resolve every matter that some might raise concerning these lands. But it does complete the fundamental protection that Congress alone can provide for these lands under the proven provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Wilderness Act.

First, I want to stress that this legislation is limited solely to lands within the Eighth Congressional District. It only concerns that portion of the existing Alpine Lakes Wilderness boundary which is within my district.

Second, as with the Wild Sky Wilderness Act passed by this House earlier this year, a key objective of this proposal is to provide the protection of the Wilderness Act for lower elevation lands. This serves several goals. It will bring into an expanded Alpine Lakes Wilderness a richer diversity of ecosystems, including deeply forested valleys, increasing the biodiversity of the overall wilderness area. And addition of these lower elevation lands has the direct effect of protecting a broader array of outdoor recreational opportunities easily accessible for our people.

Third, a key element of this legislation is the designation of the entirety of the Pratt River, from its headwaters within the existing 1976 boundary of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness to its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River, as a "wild river" pursuant to the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Obviously, there are huge benefits from assuring strongest protection and consistent management embracing entire watersheds where we have the chance. This legislation will complete that job for the Pratt River, with "wild river" protection for its full length, and inclusion of its entire watershed within the expanded Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

Finally, this legislation includes a specific provision addressing the best future management of two small tracts of lands that are presently owned by the State of Washington through its Department of Natural Resources. I believe that the State agrees with local outdoor and conservation organizations that there are good reasons that the boundary of the additions to the federal Alpine Lakes Wilderness should include these two tracts, as has often been done before, and as was contemplated under the provisions of section 5 of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Though these tracts are within the boundary of the proposed federal wilderness area, these State lands would not become subject to Forest Service administration or the provisions of the Wilderness Act unless and until they are acquired by the Forest Service.

And, Madam Speaker, that is all that this new legislation proposes. It represents a straight-forward approach to complete the work of Congress for the protection of these key lands and waters in ways that only we in Congress can confer.

As I noted earlier, this legislation specifically does not seek to address or resolve every issue about details of the management of these lands that are, within the framework of the wilderness and wild river designations, properly left to the professional discretion of the Forest Service. A good example is the question of completing of a trail segment within the proposed wilderness that is referred to as "the Pratt Connector." User groups, conservation leaders, and others interested in this area have varying views about the merits of this proposed trail segment. Under the Forest Service's existing authority this decision is best left to the consultative processes the Forest Service routinely follows in such cases. Thus, there is no need for this matter to come to Congress as part of this legislation.

BACKYARD WILDERNESS

Madam Speaker, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness is one of the treasures of Washington

State. It reaches from icy and isolated mountain peaks down to deep valleys covered by silent forests where visitors are reminded of the original landscape of so much of our state. It is a recreational treasure, too, with the existing wilderness area anchoring a spectrum of recreational opportunities, not only within its boundaries but in the surrounding area. And all of this is, on its western side, situated so near to the Seattle/Tacoma metropolitan area that this special place is affectionately known as our "backyard wilderness."

The statutory protection proposed in this legislation for the additional wilderness lands and for the Pratt River will enhance the overall fabric of protection and public use opportunities of the Alpine Lakes area. Like other wilderness areas Congress has established literally at the city limits of major urban area—Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Tucson, and greater Los Angeles, for example—we should act now to assure we have used the strongest policy tools in our nature-protection toolkit to conserve and protect the wild jewel that is the centerpiece of a beloved, much-used landscape for our people.

These wilderness additions, and the protection of the Pratt River "fit" into the larger pattern we have been putting in place to protect our wild heritage. And this wilderness will serve vast, untold numbers of Americans.

First, it serves those who choose to adventure into its quiet valleys and up to its sentinel peaks. Some of those are hardy mountain climbers; for others the adventure is an afternoon walk, grandparents introducing their grandchildren to nature and its most wild and inviting along a quiet, easy wilderness trail.

Second, this expanded wilderness serves those who choose other forms of recreation in the adjacent lands. Mountain bikers find challenges along trails that bring them along the wilderness boundary.

A perfect example, where I walked with avid mountain bikers and other conservationists, is the trail along the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River. This trail is not within the wilderness, but closely follows its boundary. By an historic agreement worked out between user groups, bicycles are allowed on this trail adjacent to the proposed wilderness addition on alternate days, so that those hikers who seek a trail experience without encountering bicyclists know they can do so on specific days. Here is an innovative resolution to what might otherwise have been a festering controversy. That collaboration is a perfect example of the broad coalition of supporters for my proposal.

Similarly, we should respect the larger group of wilderness users—and I emphasize that these are wilderness users—who take pleasure from the wilderness that they view from the Mountain-to-Sound Greenway, an extraordinary corridor of protected federal, state, and private lands offering all kinds of recreational opportunities to those who travel across our state on Interstate 90, which crosses the Cascades at Snoqualmie Pass, just south of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Those who savor the wild scenery from more developed sites and roadways, are no less users of wilderness than the adventurers who trek to the highest, farther peaks.

Finally, Madam Speaker, there is the largest "interest group" of all—the future generations for whom we act today. As a grandfather, I understand that we have a stake today, in a future we ourselves will not live. That is the

world in which our grandchildren's children will live their lives, amid whatever kind of landscape we have left them. Count mine as one solid voice and vote on behalf of taking care that the landscape we bequeath to future generations is one with an abundant, generous, diverse system of wilderness areas, not only in the remotest stretches of the Arctic, but right here close to home—in a “backyard wilderness” such as the Alpine Lakes.

IN LASTING MEMORY OF JUDGE
CHARLES SKINNER

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Judge Charles Skinner, a true treasure to the community of El Dorado, Arkansas, and to Union County. Judge Skinner passed away November 2, 2007, at the age of 73.

Judge Charles Skinner spent his lifetime dedicated to public service and to improving the community around him. He devoted 20 years to Union County as a juvenile probation officer where he garnered much support and admiration for his professionalism and outgoing nature. His work over the years with youth where he taught the values of respect and service shaped the lives of numerous young people, and had a lasting impact on the quality of life in Union County that can still be felt today.

It was Judge Skinner's deep work ethic and dedication to helping others that led him to seek public office as Union County Judge. His popularity, which he gained through his selfless service, was evident in his 1990 landslide victory in which he won each precinct within the county. He will always be remembered and held in high regard for his service to Union County to make it a better place to live for all who called it home.

Throughout his life and career, Judge Skinner believed deeply in the fundamental idea of assisting others and giving back to those who needed a helping hand. I extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Jo Ann Skinner of El Dorado; his two sons, Charles Skinner Jr., of El Dorado and David Skinner of El Dorado; his brother, James Skinner of Magnolia; and to his numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends. Judge Skinner will be greatly missed in El Dorado, Union County and throughout the state of Arkansas, and I will continue to keep his family in my thoughts and prayers.

EXPRESSING CONCERN RELATING
TO IRANIAN REGIME AND
MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 5, 2007

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 435, a resolution that I authored with my friend, Mr. MACK.

This resolution expresses the concern of the House of Representatives about the growing

national security implications of Iran's relationships with countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has visited Latin America three times in the past year, and has signed agreements with several countries in the region worth billions of dollars. This is a strategic move on his part to build capabilities in our neighborhood.

On one side of the word, Iran continues to make progress on its nuclear program. And, on this side of the word, Iran has tried to sway leaders into supporting this dangerous agenda. And so far, his strategy is gaining momentum, which is extremely alarming.

Iranian involvement in Latin America is particularly concerning, especially considering Iran's history in places like Argentina. This week, Interpol, the world's law enforcement agency, will consider whether to uphold the arrest warrants for five Iranians and one Lebanese who planned and executed the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center. Argentines are still waiting for justice to be served against those responsible, and Hizbollah and Iran are the lead suspects.

I also remain concerned about Hizbollah in our hemisphere as it relates to fundraising in the tri-border area, and other places. In fact, just last month, Admiral Jim Stavreede, head of the U.S. Southern Command wrote, “We consider Latin America and the Caribbean as being highly likely bases for future terrorist threats to the U.S. and others.”

The region has seen some progress, with new anti-terrorism legislation and increased counter-terrorism efforts. But, we all have a long way to go. Eliminating the threat of terrorism and its state sponsors is not just in the best interest of the United States. The countries in our hemisphere will be safer. The United States and Central and Latin America have an aligned interest.

I hope that this resolution is seen as a signal that the United States is willing to help our friends in Central and Latin America make their countries safer and free from terrorism.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR FRANK J.
RYAN

HON. MIKE FERGUSON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Mr. FERGUSON. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Mayor Frank J. Ryan and his service to the residents of Bound Brook, NJ.

Mayor Ryan is a graduate of Bound Brook High School and is married to Rachel “Te.” He is a father of two, and grandfather of four. Mayor Ryan served with honor in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. In 1959, Mayor Ryan was elected to the Board of Education, where he served for 7 years before also serving as the president of the Board of Education between 1966 and 1968. In 1998, he was elected to the Borough Council and in 2000 was elected mayor of Bound Brook.

Together, Mayor Ryan and I have worked on flood control for the Bound Brook portion of the Green Brook Flood Control Project. To date, we have secured more than 50 million Federal dollars and have completed more than half of the project. Mayor Ryan has been and remains a strong advocate of the project; ear-

lier this year he travelled to Washington to personally promote continued Federal funding for the project with senior members of the House Appropriations Committee.

Mayor Ryan is retiring this year from elective public service in Bound Brook. On behalf of residents of Bound Brook, I wish Mayor Ryan many happy years of rest and relaxation with his wife, Te, and I am pleased to honor his service to Bound Brook.

HONORING CENTRAL VALLEY
SAFETY SOCIETY

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the Central Valley Safety Society for their commitment to serving the Central Valley.

The Central Valley Safety Society, CVSS, was created as a non-profit organization in 1996 to provide safety and human resource professionals with a place to exchange ideas and information, for the professional enhancement of members and to recognize those who excel in safety and health. CVSS is based in the Central Valley and is the only group of its kind from Los Angeles to Modesto. The long time organizational members include; Pelco, Rich Products, The Fresno Bee, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, Fresno County EOC and Clovis Cemetery District.

CVSS holds nine monthly luncheon meetings in downtown Fresno. Typically, there are 20 to 30 members present to discuss topics that cover a range of issues from Heat Illness Protection, Hazardous Materials and Health and Wellness Programs. The speakers are typically volunteers from the community. Over the past 8 years, the organization has partnered with similar organizations in the Fresno area, such as; Ag Safe, Human Resource Association of Central California, Fresno County Employer Advisory Council and California State University SHRM Student Chapter. CVSS has partnered with these and other organizations to plan and participate in a half-day human resource and safety seminar and it is held annually in October.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the Central Valley Safety Society for their commitment to serving the Central Valley. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing the organization many years of continued success.

CITY OF ST. PETE BEACH, FL,
CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating the people of St. Pete Beach, FL, as they celebrate the city's 50th anniversary this weekend.

It is an honor to represent this beautiful beach community that is home to one of our Nation's finest beaches and picture perfect